GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:595
ANSWERED ON:13.08.2012
CHECK ON IMMERSION OF IDOLS IN RIVERS
Natrajan Meenakshi

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether immersion of idols in rivers has harmful environmental hazards in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government has issued norms to check immersion of idols decked with toxic dyes and insoluble materials;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether instances of these norms being flouted recently in the country;

(f) if so, the action taken by the Government against the violators;

(g) whether the Government proposes to step up vigil during festivities and imposition of heavy penalties on violators to check this practice in the country; and

(h) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN)

(a) & (b) For decoration of idols, metals, oil substances, synthetic colours, chemicals etc. are used. When such idols are immersed in water bodies including rivers, water quality gets affected. The idol immersion leads to silting and leaching of toxic chemicals used in preparation of idols thereby turning river fronts un-aesthetic and endangering life of river.

(c) & (d) In pursuance to Directions of Hon'ble Bombay High Court in the matter of PIL WP (c) 1325/2003, Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has evolved guidelines for immersion of idols and other puja materials for preventing the pollution of water bodies in June, 2010. The guidelines cover the following:

(i) General guidelines for idol immersion with respect to idol making and management of other materials used during worship;

(ii) General Guidelines for Local Bodies/Authorities to exercise the guidelines during the events of idol immersion; and

(iii) Role of State Pollution Control Boards in monitoring water quality;

(e) & (f) The guidelines are to be implemented at the State level where such events take place. The local bodies, particularly municipalities monitor the activities during immersion process. The concerned State Pollution Control Boards / Pollution Control Committees monitor the water quality.

(g) & (h) In case of idol immersion in rivers, it has been suggested in the guidelines that temporary ponds having earthen bunds along river bank should be created as idol immersion spots. Removable synthetic liner may be placed well in advance in bottom of the pond. The said liner along with remains of idols should be removed from the point within 48 hours of immersion of idols.